



UNIVERSE

1

RATED T+ TEEN PLUS  
DCCOMICS.COM

6-ISSUE  
MINI-  
SERIES

FROM THE PAGES OF  
DARK NIGHTS  
**METAL**

THE

BATMAN

WHO LAUGHS

MISS  
ME?

SNYDER  
JOCK  
BARON

Jock





Capullo  
+ fco

THE BATMAN WHO LAUGHS 1 SNYDER • JOCK • BARON

RATED T+ TEEN PLUS  
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What is your  
happiest  
memory?

Mine is  
my first.

I am four years old and  
running toward the manor.  
It's a warm summer evening  
and past my bedtime.

My parents and Alfred  
stand between me and  
the house with their  
hands clasped. We're  
playing a game.



The object is for  
me to try to break  
through their arms  
and make it inside.

So I run and  
I throw myself  
against their  
arms as hard  
as I can...but  
every time they  
stop me.

They keep me  
there with them,  
so we can all play  
a little longer.

So I won't  
find myself  
on the other  
side in a dark,  
empty house,  
all alone.

I still  
remember  
the smell  
of the cut  
grass. The  
bright red  
sun, like a  
bloodshot  
eye peeking  
through the  
bars of the  
trees.

What I  
remember most  
is the strength  
of their arms  
holding me  
back...

...and above all,  
the laughter.  
All of us laughing  
like lunatics as  
the sky darkened  
behind the house.



**GOTHAM NOW!**



**RUUUUMMBBLE**



ALFRED,  
STATUS!





I SEE AT LEAST THREE SHOOTERS, SIR, NOT INCLUDING THE DRIVER!

AND THE TRUCKS?



YOU WERE RIGHT. I'M DETECTING EXTRA COMPARTMENTS INSIDE THE FLATBED CUSHIONING.

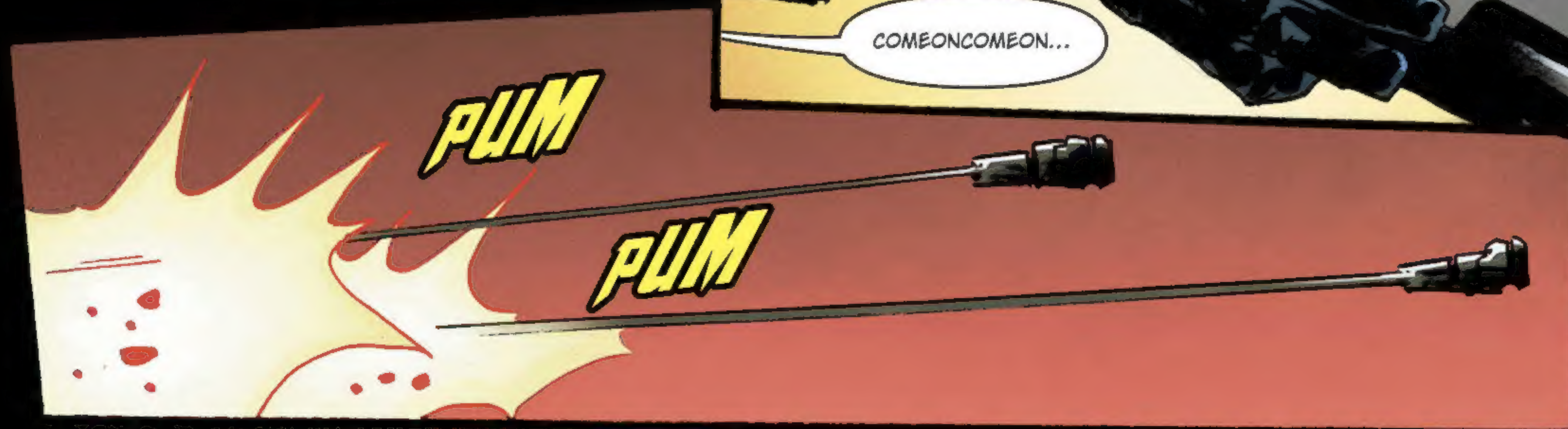
CAN YOU SEE WHAT THEY'RE SMUGGLING INSIDE?



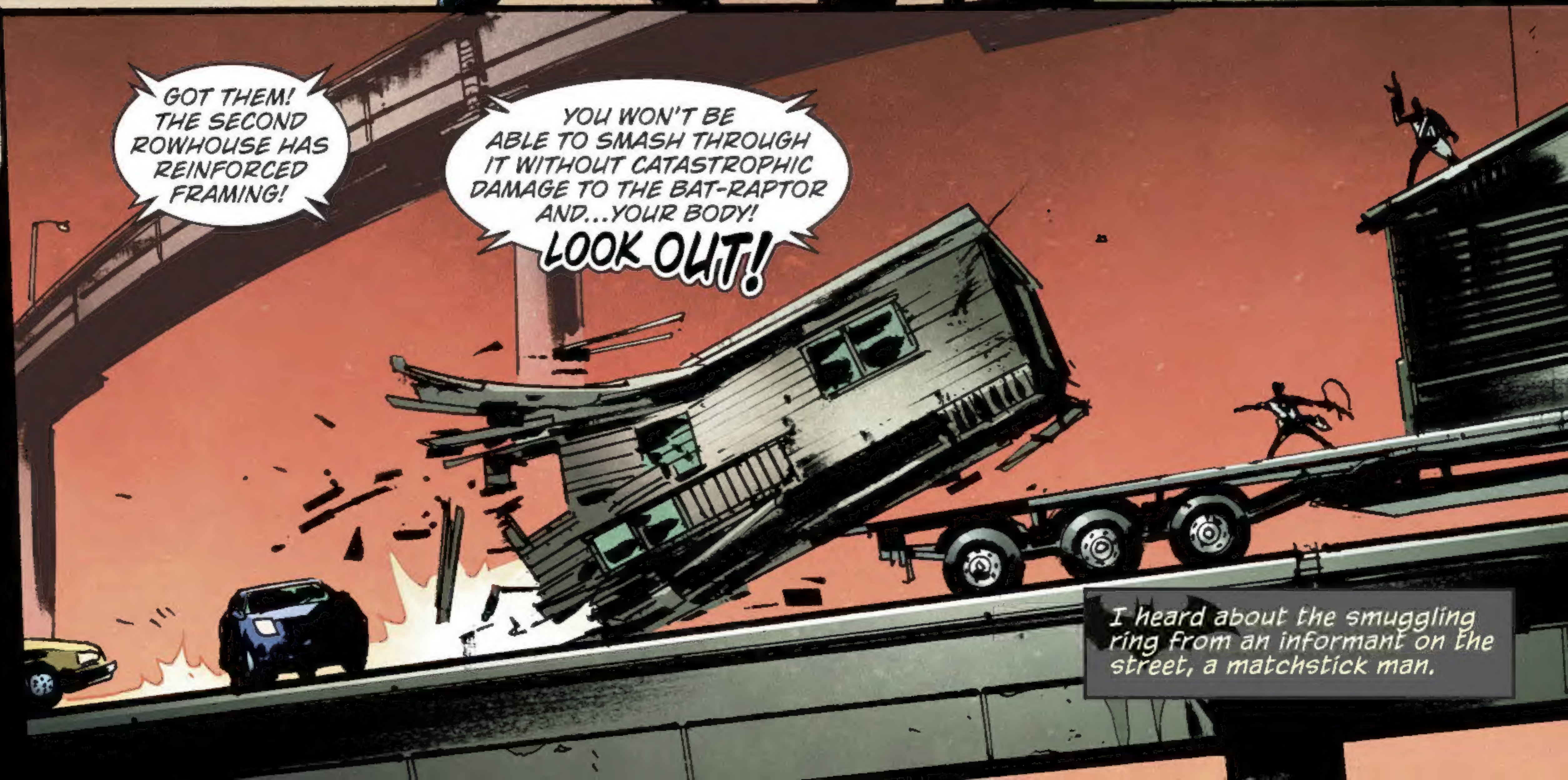
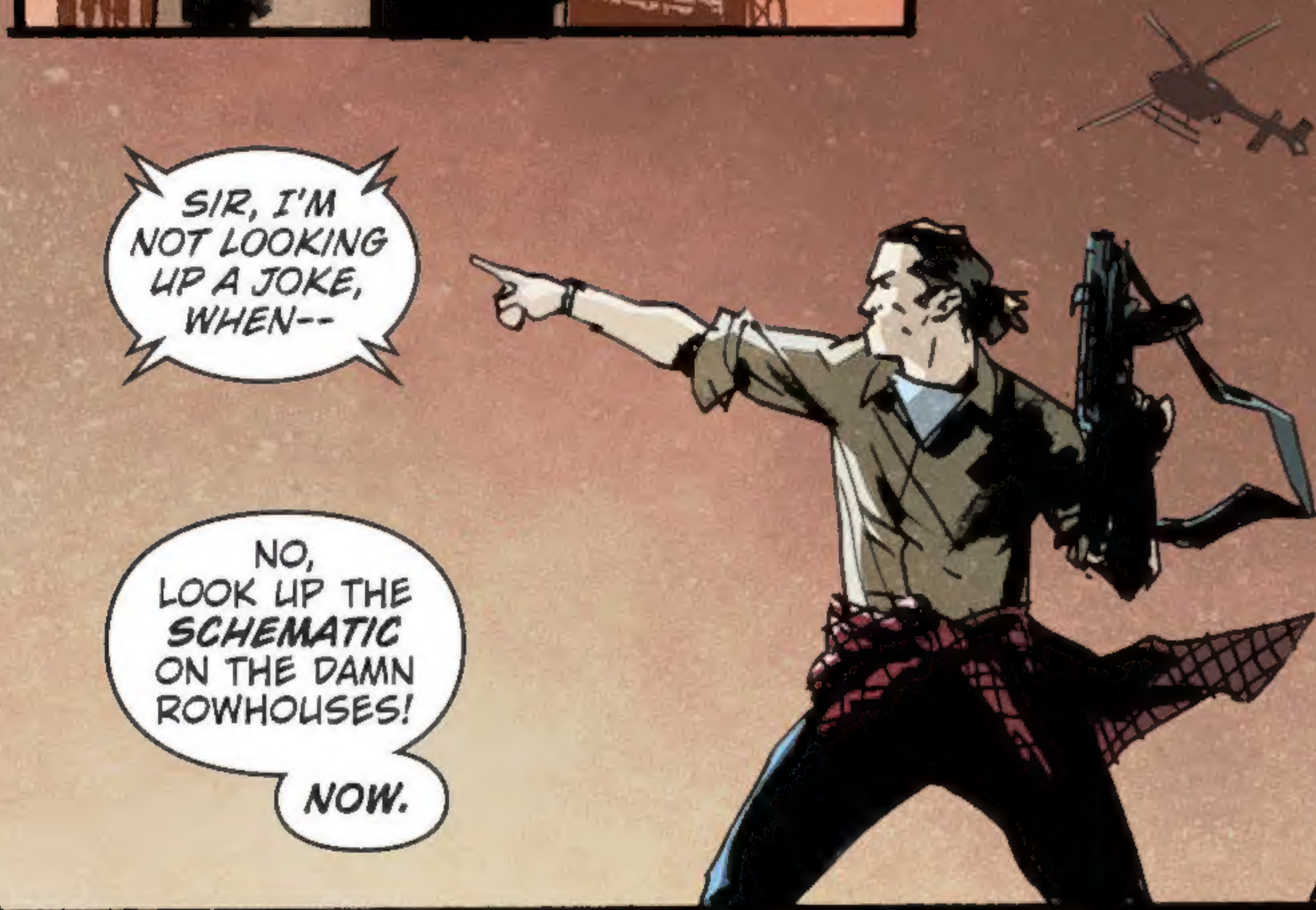
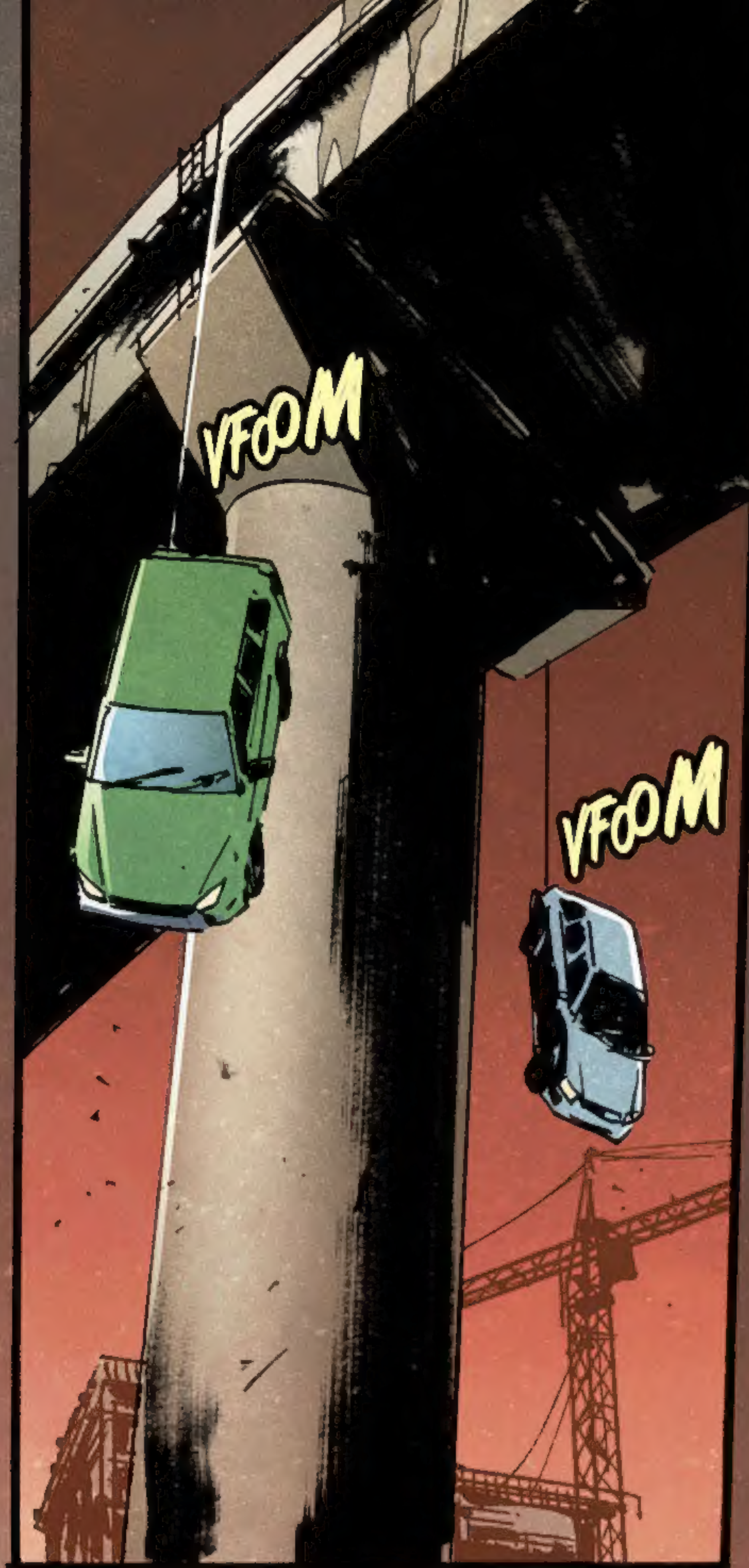
NO, IT'S REINFORCED. WHATEVER IS IN THERE, THEY'RE NOT GOING TO GIVE IT UP EASILY.

WELL WE NEED TO GET THEM OFF THIS ROAD, NOW! THERE ARE TOO MANY PEOPLE HERE TO--









...ALFRED,  
LOOK UP THE  
SCHEMATIC ON  
THE LAST TWO  
HOUSES. MAKE  
SURE THEY'RE  
PENETRABLE.

I MUST SAY,  
GOTHAM BANKS MIGHT  
CONSIDER OFFERING  
BATMAN INSURANCE  
POLICIES.

THEY  
DO. LOOK  
IT UP.

SIR, I'M  
NOT LOOKING  
UP A JOKE,  
WHEN--

NO,  
LOOK UP THE  
SCHEMATIC  
ON THE DAMN  
ROWHOUSES!

NOW.

GOT THEM!  
THE SECOND  
ROWHOUSE HAS  
REINFORCED  
FRAMING!

YOU WON'T BE  
ABLE TO SMASH THROUGH  
IT WITHOUT CATASTROPHIC  
DAMAGE TO THE BAT-RAPTOR  
AND...YOUR BODY!

LOOK OUT!

I heard about the smuggling  
ring from an informant on the  
street, a matchstick man.



They use *extreme-load* trucks to carry contraband from Gotham to the outside world.

The company is called *Happy Trails*.

**TIK**

Word on the street is that they've been smuggling bodies out of Gotham that came into the morgue unidentified, headed for the potter's field.

Trucks like these have pockets within the flatbeds for compression, so they can carry things up to three, four tons--like historical rowhouses removed to make room for new condos.

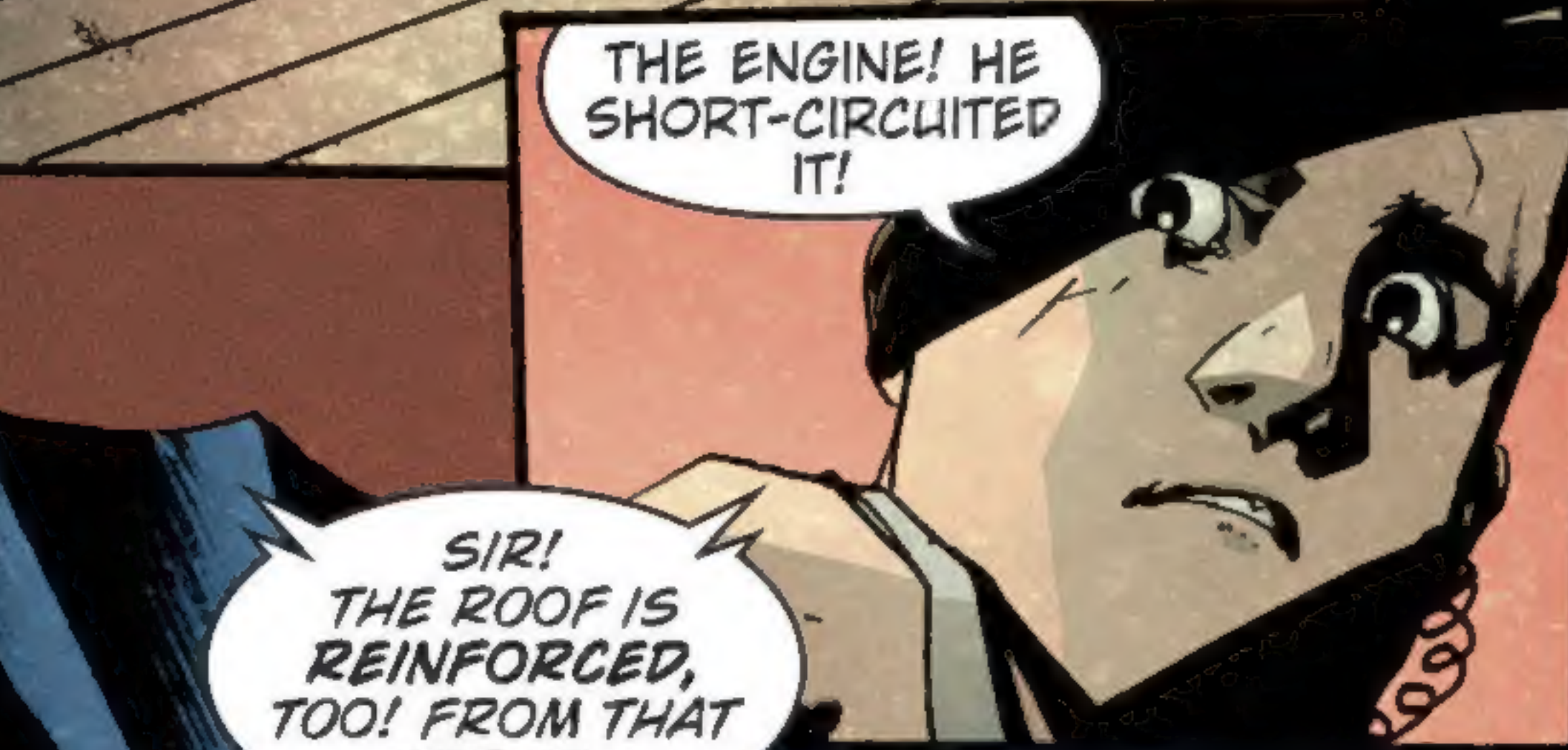
These are the bodies of people who lived and died here, in this city, in Gotham. People we failed to protect in life...

...but these thieves think they can take them over that bridge? Out of Gotham to be *hacked up*?

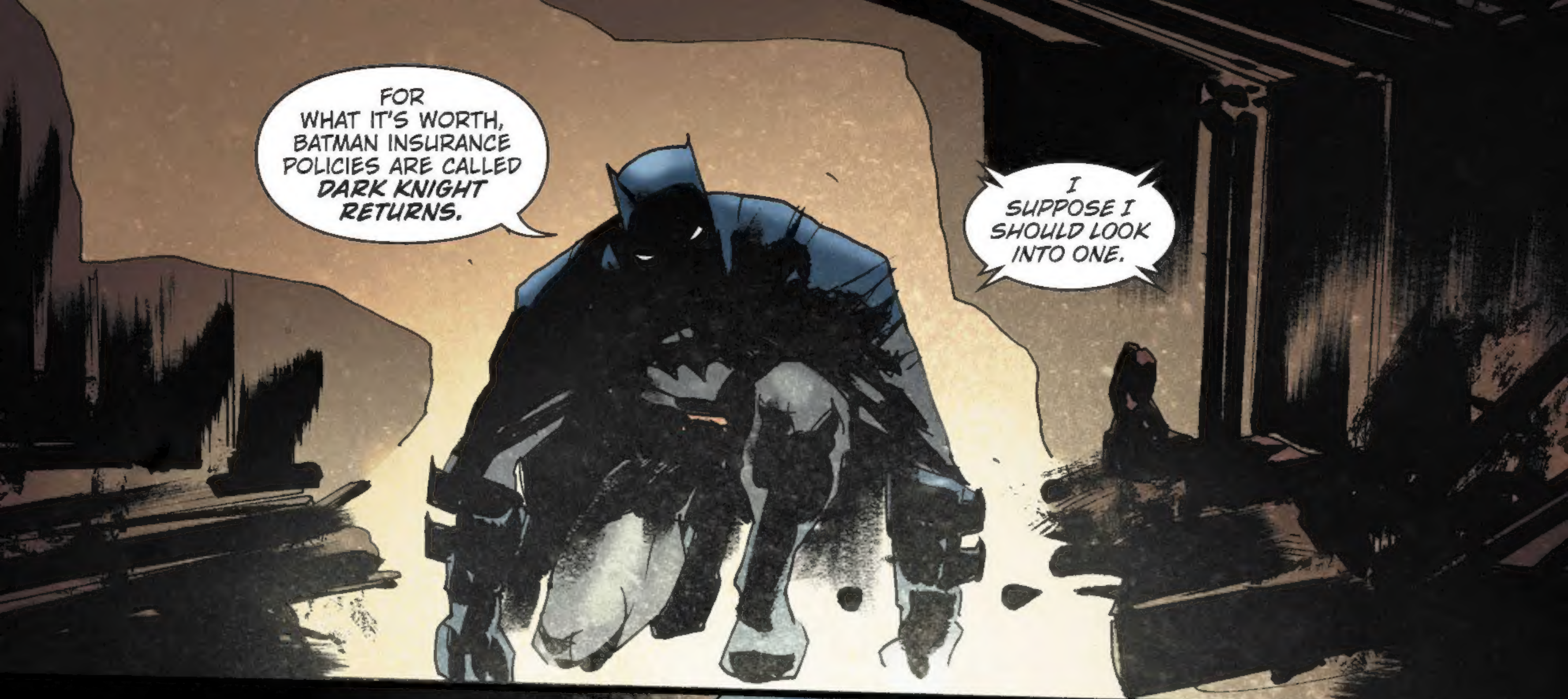
The thought makes me angrier than I expect.

**KA-CHING**









FOR WHAT IT'S WORTH, BATMAN INSURANCE POLICIES ARE CALLED **DARK KNIGHT RETURNS.**

I SUPPOSE I SHOULD LOOK INTO ONE.



SCANNING THE FLATBED...

...THERE.



212-- 4.43

1111001  
(AAAAA)

I'VE GOT IT.



SECURING BAT-CHARGE.

Gotham's potter's field was established in the city's early days by its most prominent citizens-- members of the Five Families.

CLIK  
CLIK



The chosen spot was one of the prettiest at that time, a field that slopes down to the bay.

DETONATING.

POOOOM





There was confusion over why the city should put a gravesite for anonymous citizens on such a prime piece of land, but the thinking was...



...whatever troubles someone faced in life here in this city...

...let them at least rest in peace on our shores.

ALL RIGHT. LET'S SEE WHO YOU...WHAT IN--

MY GOD...SIR, IS THAT...

...YOU?





# GOTHAM MORGUE.

DECEASED IS  
BRUCE WAYNE.

AGE,  
ROUGHLY 42,  
MAYBE 43.  
CAUSE OF  
DEATH,  
UNKNOWN.

SUBJECT  
APPEARS TO HAVE  
BEEN IN GOOD PHYSICAL  
HEALTH. NO WOUNDS, NO  
INTERNAL INJURIES  
APPARENT.

ARE YOU  
HEARING  
ME?

HEY.  
ALFRED?

I'M SORRY,  
SIR. BUT IF I  
MAY, IT'S HARD TO  
BE AS CLINICAL  
AS YOU THIS  
TIME.

THE DNA  
MATCHES MINE, BUT  
IT COULD BE SOME  
TRICK, SOME--

I KNOW YOU. I  
RAISED YOU, AND  
THAT IS YOU ON THE  
TABLE. SOME OLDER  
VERSION OF YOU.  
IT'S JUST  
TOO--

LOOK, IT'S  
UNNERVING FOR  
ME, TOO. BUT IT'S  
STILL A CASE. NOW I HAVE  
EYES ON ME, AND THE  
REAL DOCTOR VETH IS  
GOING TO WAKE UP  
ANY MINUTE.

ARE YOU  
HEARING  
ME?

I'M...I'M  
SORRY. I'M  
HERE. I'LL  
HELP.

NO  
INTERNAL  
INJURIES.  
YOU WERE  
SAYING?





AS FAR AS I CAN TELL, HE IS ME.

I'M MAPPING THE SCARS, TOO...

...AND HE SEEMS TO HAVE ALL THE ONES I HAVE FROM MY EARLY YEARS.

MY TRAINING--HERE, THE BURN FROM *DUCARD*. THE LACERATION FROM HARVEY, WHEN HE FIRST BECAME *TWO-FACE*...



I KNOW THOSE SCARS TOO WELL, SIR. THE WHOLE HISTORY.



THAT'S JUST IT THOUGH, ALFRED. HE DOESN'T HAVE THE WHOLE HISTORY.

HE HAS THE SCARS UP TO A POINT. LOOK. LOOK FOR THE SCARS FROM THE LAST FEW YEARS...



THEY'RE... THEY'RE NOT THERE.

HE'S ME, BUT A ME WHO CHOSE A DIFFERENT PATH AT A CRUCIAL JUNCTURE.



MY GUESS, GIVEN HIS PHYSIOLOGY, IS THAT THE POINT CAME WHEN BANE BROKE MY BACK.

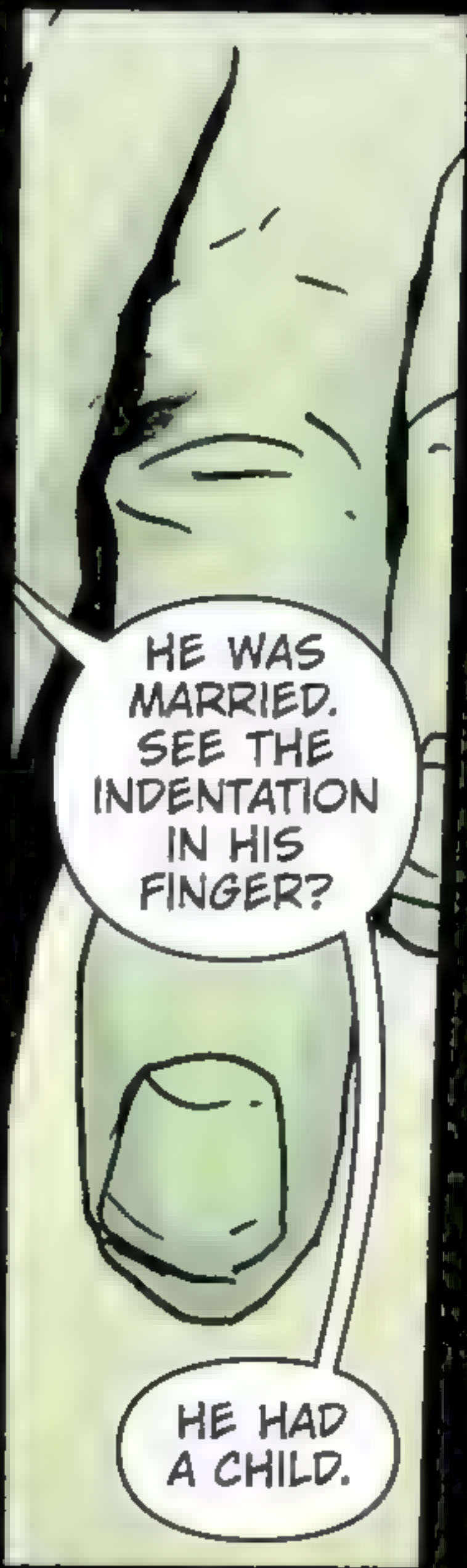
THIS BRUCE WAYNE...HE RETIRED FROM BEING BATMAN AFTER THAT HAPPENED. FOUND A *DIFFERENT* WAY TO HELP GOTHAM.

WHAT WAY?

MY THEORY? LOOK AT HIS HANDS, THAT'S ECO-FIBER BENEATH HIS NAILS USED IN GREEN CONSTRUCTION.

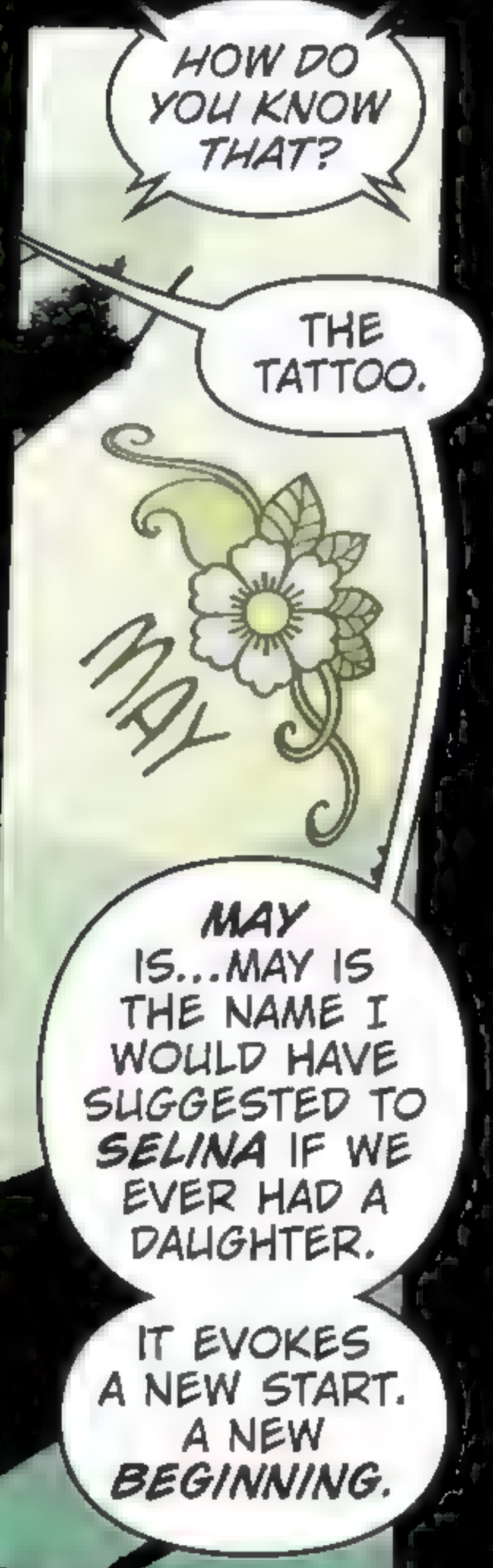


THIS BRUCE LIKELY WAS IN CIVIL PROJECTS. IMPROVING THE CITY TO PROTECT IT.



HE WAS MARRIED. SEE THE INDENTATION IN HIS FINGER?

HE HAD A CHILD.



HOW DO YOU KNOW THAT?

THE TATTOO.

MAY

MAY IS...MAY IS THE NAME I WOULD HAVE SUGGESTED TO *SELINA* IF WE EVER HAD A DAUGHTER.

IT EVOKES A NEW START. A NEW BEGINNING.





THE LINES  
AROUND THIS  
BRUCE'S  
EYES...

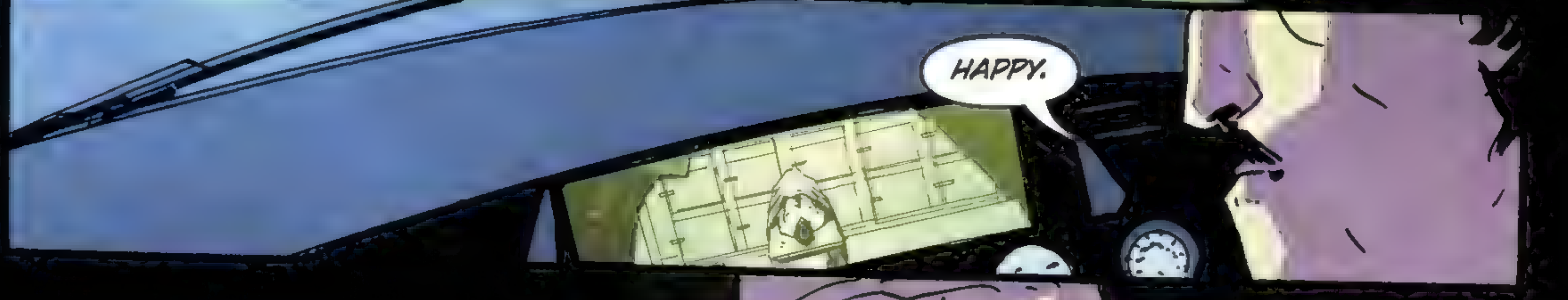
SMILE  
LINES.



AND HIS  
MOUTH.

LAUGH  
LINES.

YES.  
IT SEEMS  
WHATEVER LIFE  
HE BUILT, HE  
WAS...



HAPPY.



SIR. SIR,  
ARE YOU  
THERE?



I'M  
HERE.



ALFRED,  
IT'S HIM.

HE'S  
BACK. I  
KNOW  
IT.

YOU CAN'T  
MEAN...

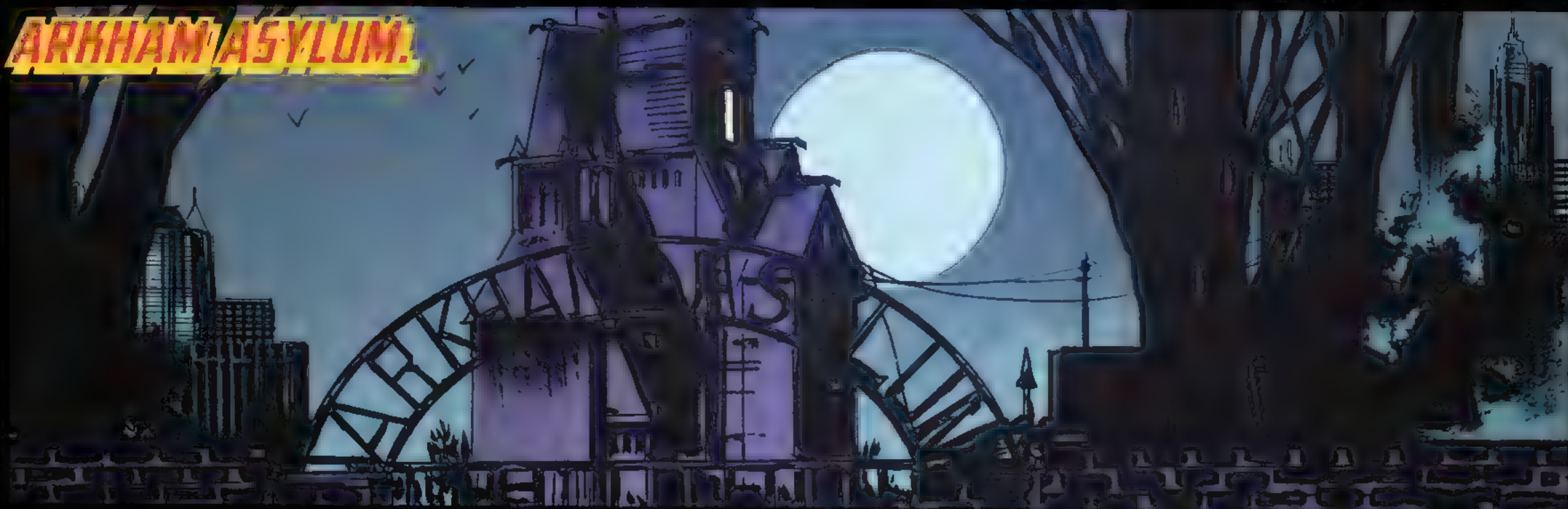


YES. YOU  
KNOW WHERE  
WE HAVE TO  
GO--TAKE US  
THERE.

RIGHT  
NOW.



**ARKHAM ASYLUM.**



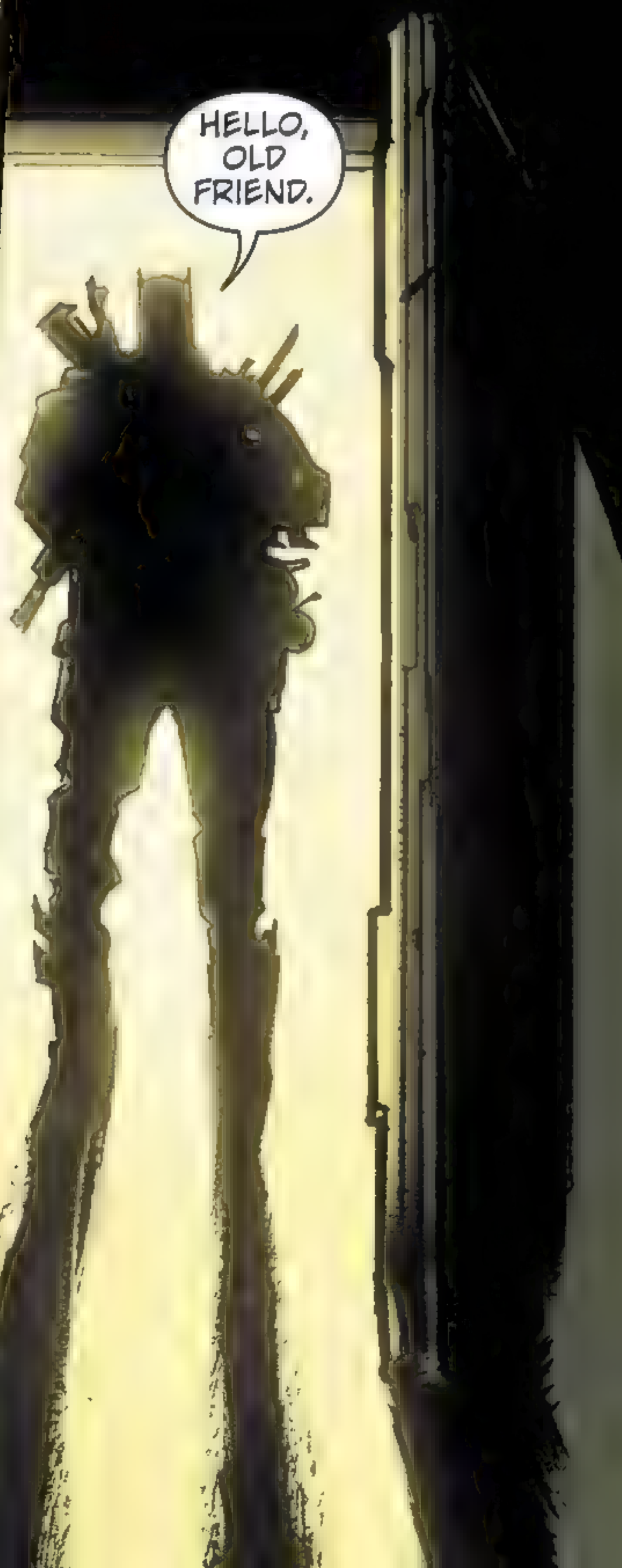
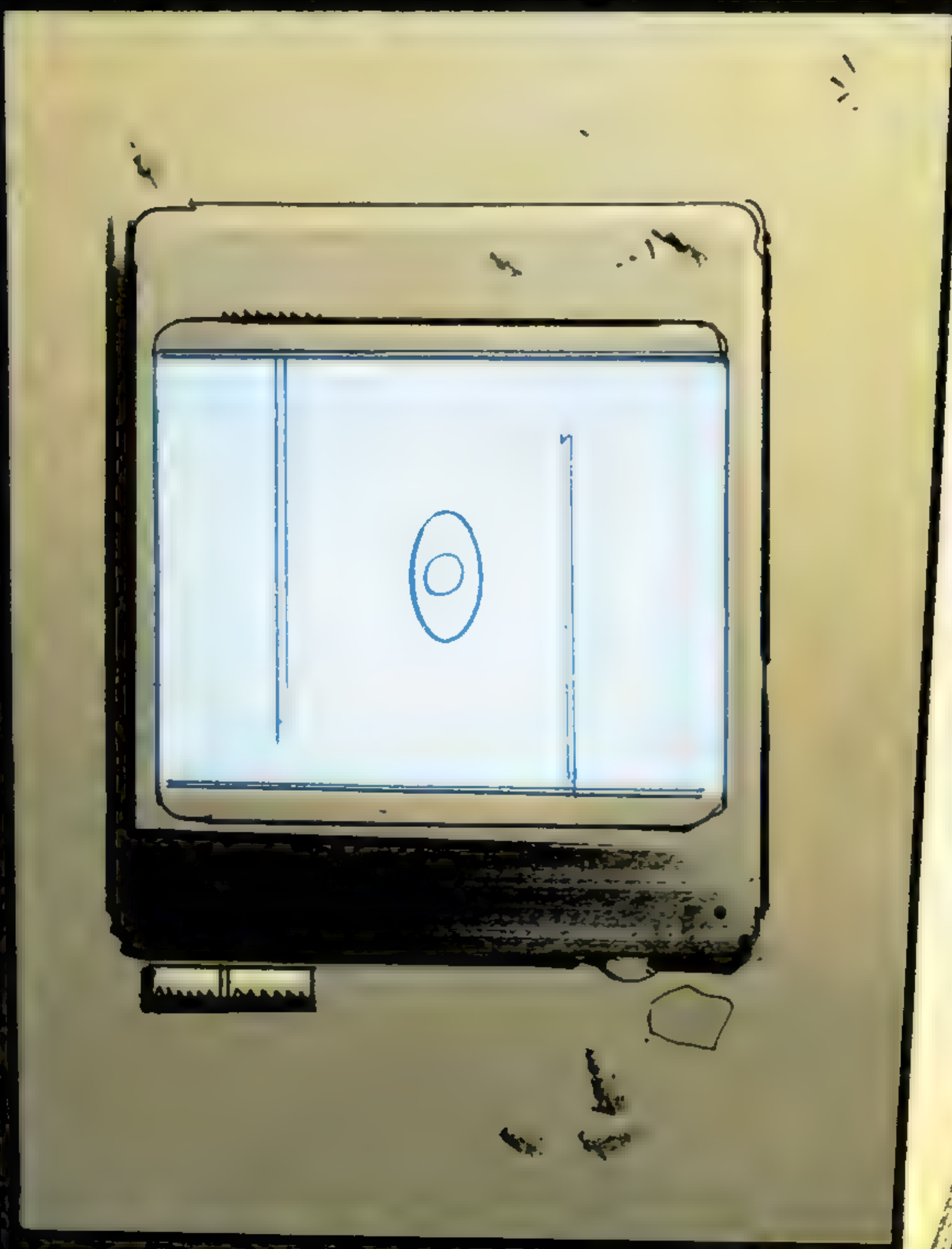
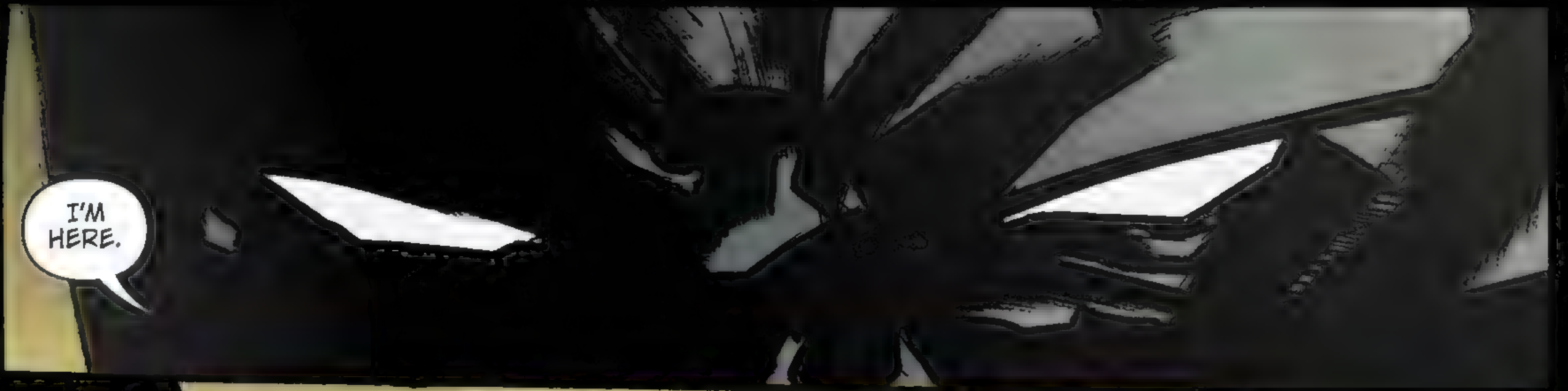












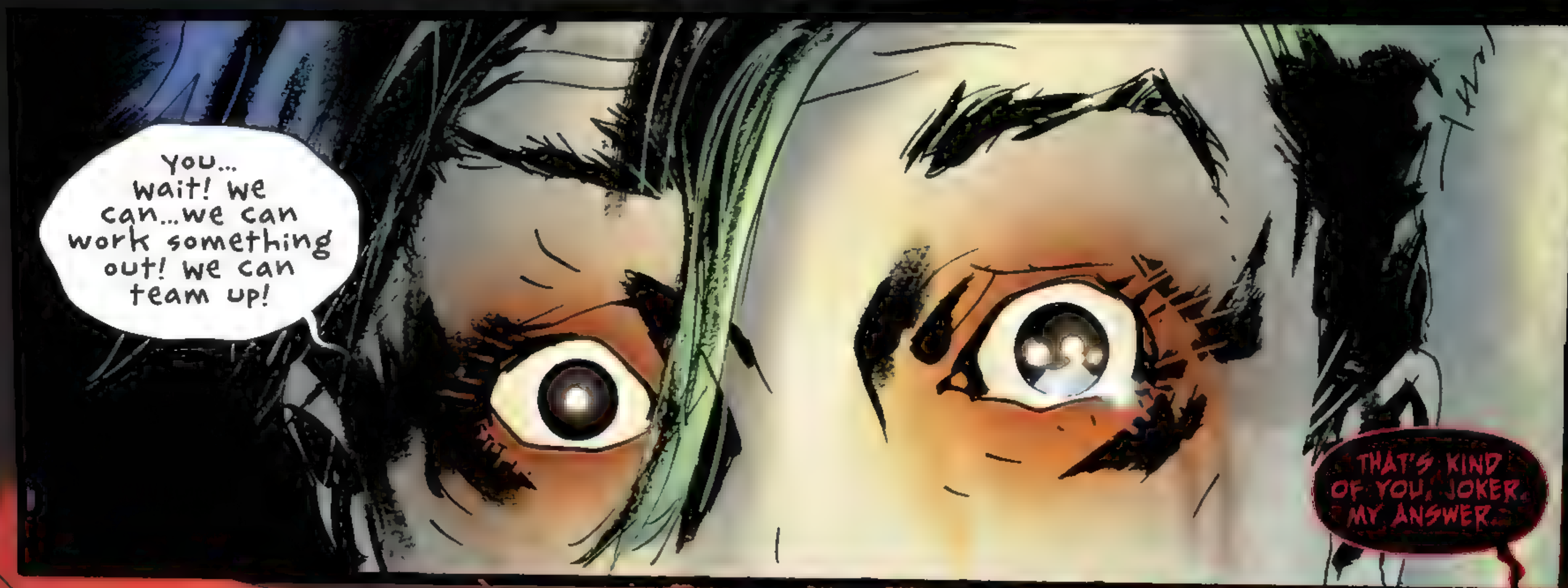














GCPD HQ.

DEEP  
DOWN, THEY  
KNOW IT WASN'T  
YOU...BUT STILL,  
THEY'RE **SCARED**.  
SO I'M KEEPING  
THE SIGNAL  
LIGHT OFF.

I  
UNDERSTAND.

SO  
THIS...THING.  
WHAT IS IT?

HE COMES  
FROM A REALM  
WHERE ALL OUR HOPES  
AND FEARS EXIST IN  
MATERIAL FORM.

I'VE HAD  
MOMENTS WHEN  
I'VE THOUGHT  
ABOUT KILLING THE  
JOKER, JIM.

BUT IT'S MY BELIEF  
THAT THE **JOKER'S HEART**  
CONTAINS A SINGULAR **SUPER-  
TOXIN** THAT'LL BE RELEASED WHEN  
HE DIES. A TOXIN THAT WILL MAKE  
WHOEVER KILLS HIM THE NEXT  
JOKER. SO THIS CREATURE,  
HE'S ME, BUT A ME WHO'S--

ALSO HIM.  
LORD...

WELL FIRST, WHO HASN'T  
THOUGHT ABOUT KILLING JOKER? THE  
CITY'LL BE HEARTBROKEN TO KNOW IT WAS  
A DECOY IN THAT CELL. HOWEVER THE HELL  
JOKER MANAGED IT, I DON'T KNOW. BUT IF  
THIS "**BATMAN WHO LAUGHS**" GUY IS THE  
JOKER IN YOUR BODY, WE CAN STILL--

HE'S NOT THE JOKER, JIM. HE'S BATMAN.  
HE'S **ME**. JOKER HAS POINTS TO  
PROVE--TO ME, TO THE  
WORLD.

THE BATMAN WHO  
LAUGHS...HE'S NOT HERE  
TO PROVE **ANYTHING**. HE'S  
HERE TO WIN, TO KILL  
ANYTHING AND EVERYTHING  
THAT'S A **THREAT**.

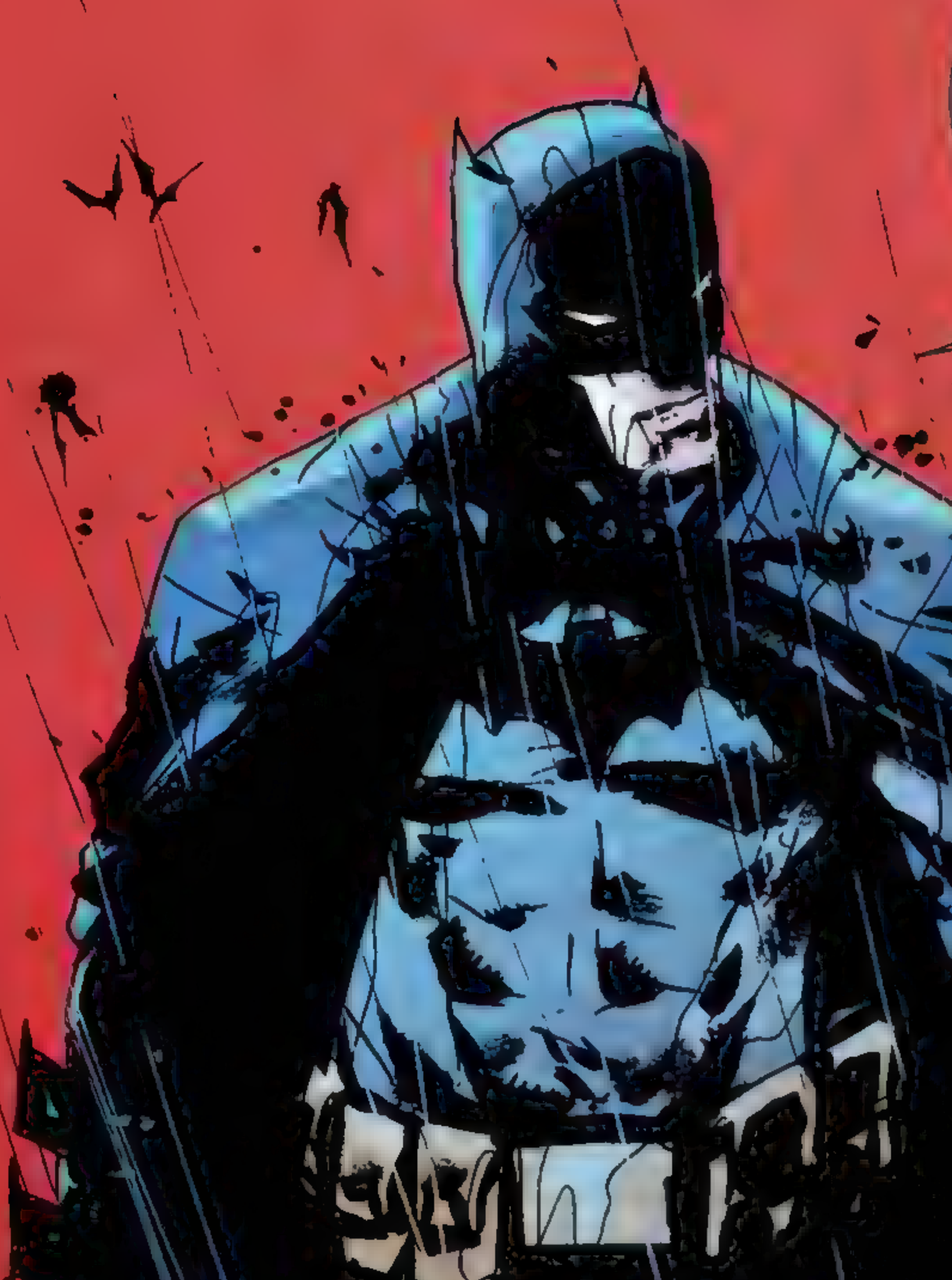
BUT  
WHEN YOU SAY  
HE'S YOU, HOW  
MUCH OF YOUR  
LIFE--

ALL OF IT. HE'S  
LED **MY** LIFE, HAS MY  
TRAINING, HAS MY MEMORIES,  
MY **MIND**...BUT HE'S ME FREE  
FROM CODES, MORALS,  
HEART BLACK AS THE  
JOKER'S.

HE'S  
THE LIVING  
EMBODIMENT  
OF THE IDEA  
THAT--

"**BATMAN  
ALWAYS WINS.**"  
MY GOD.






HE'S AN  
**APEX PREDATOR**, JIM.  
HE CONQUERED AND KILLED  
WORLD AFTER WORLD IN HIS DIMENSION.  
AND HE'S HERE FOR SOMETHING. THIS  
OTHER BATMAN HE BROUGHT WHO  
KILLED EVERYONE AT ARKHAM AND  
NEARLY KILLED FREEZE...THE  
ONE THEY'RE CALLING  
**"THE GRIM KNIGHT"**...

...THE BATMAN  
WHO LAUGHS MUST HAVE  
BROUGHT HIM OVER BEFORE  
OUR LAST BATTLE. KEPT HIM  
HIDDEN, WAITING UNTIL NOW. BUT  
WHY? AND WHAT ABOUT THIS  
DEAD BRUCE WAYNE IN  
THE MORGUE?

HE HAS  
A PLAN...  
I...I JUST  
CAN'T SEE  
IT YET,  
DAMMIT.



I NEED...  
HELP.



At the time of the attack, the  
Joker had only been in Arkham a  
short while. The decoy in his cell  
must have been swapped in only  
days ago. As though the Joker  
knew what was coming for him...

...the name of the man  
impersonating him was  
changed multiple times to  
hide his identity. One of  
Joker's Slapstick Men.

Each name change has  
significance. Glucks.  
Sonasa. Lykken. Gladjeg.  
The names are all from  
words that mean  
"happiness" in other  
languages, but each has  
one added letter.

Put together, the letters  
spell "**Sang**"--an old  
Gotham comedy club  
expression. If you sang,  
you had the best set of  
your career. The fat lady  
sang. You could die now.

So what would have  
been, or would be, the  
happiest moment in  
Joker's life? Where  
would it take place?  
Where am I supposed  
to meet him?

And then it  
hits me...



...I already know I've known all along.

I DON'T UNDERSTAND, SIR. WHY WOULD WE UNDO THE WATERWAY SECURITY SYSTEMS? THE ROCKS WILL SHIFT, THE TUNNELS WILL OPEN.

ALFRED, DO IT.

ANYONE TRAVELING THOSE WATERWAYS WILL BE ABLE TO COME RIGHT INTO--

**I SAID DO IT!**

IT'S ALREADY DONE, I JUST...

...MY GOD...

...WAS SOMEONE ALREADY LURKING DOWN THERE, WAITING?

NO, NO, NO. TELL ME IT'S NOT HIM, SIR. WHO IS IT?!

**WHO'S THERE?!**

Now, now, Jeevessss...





...I'm supposed to say "knock, knock" first.



YOU'LL BE SAFE HERE, JOKER.



Heeeeee

BUT I don't want to be safe, old friend...





...and  
you don't  
either!



WHAT ARE YOU  
DOING?! JOKER, WE  
NEED TO WORK  
TOGET--



BLAM





A TRICK GUN...?

ALFRED, HE'S GOING! HIS HEART... THE BLOOD, ARTERIAL...

JOKER! JOKER STAY WITH ME! WHY...WHY DID YOU DO THAT?!

BECAUSSSE...



The only way you'll beat him... Is to become him. Heh.



MY GOD... YOUR HEART. THE TOXIN... WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?!

NO... NO!

FSSS

HE'S... HE'S REALLY GONE, SIR.

WHY ARE YOU SMILING LIKE THAT?

WHAT'S WRONG?!

In a second Alfred rushes to me.



And just like in that first memory, I feel the warmth of his hands, the strength as they hold me back...

...he's calling to me. But all I can hear...

HEEEE



...is laughter.

HAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA!

# THE BATMAN WHO LAUGHS

## THE LAUGHING HOUSE PART 1

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